

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a light gray color, framing the central text.

**the best thing
that's ever been
mine**

thisismydesignn

the best thing that's ever been mine by thisismydesignn

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Angst, Boys In Love, Boys Kissing, Canon Compliant, Canonical Character Death, Fluff, Kissing, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-10-04

Updated: 2017-10-04

Packaged: 2020-01-23 20:12:11

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,533

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The first and last times Richie and Eddie kiss, and a few moments in between.

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Author's Note:

I have a lot of feelings about Eddie (movie!Eddie in particular), which have turned into a lot of feelings about Eddie and Richie, which have turned into...this, apparently. Hope y'all enjoy?

...title from a Taylor Swift song, because I am That Person.

The first time they kiss, they're fifteen years old and Eddie has run out of ways to shut Richie up.

He's in the middle of an impassioned rant and Eddie has long since given up on cutting in, on even listening, knowing it's pointless when Richie is in this deep. Instead...

It's not the first time he's found himself distracted watching Richie's lips move. He knows he shouldn't, but can't help the way he stares—at his mouth, his hands, and Eddie feels weak, doesn't stop to think as he leans in, making the move he always told himself he'd never dare risk.

He captures Richie's lips beneath his own, cutting him off mid-sentence; Richie freezes but doesn't pull away, and the sudden silence is deafening.

After a moment, two, Eddie pulls back, leaving Richie mystified. "The fuck was that for, Eds?" he asks, adjusting his glasses; Eddie flushes red to the tips of his ears, muttering, "Don't call me that," for what feels like the millionth time. He can't quite meet Richie's eyes, doesn't know what the hell to do, to say, but for once, for *once*, instead of doubling down, Richie just looks at Eddie— and leans in to kiss him again.

It's Eddie's turn to be taken by surprise. His mind is racing a mile a minute— *what the hell are we doing, I don't even know where his mouth has been, is this actually happening*— but then Richie's fingers curl

around the back of Eddie's neck, mouth opening beneath his and Eddie finds himself relaxing into the kiss, pressing closer, chasing the hint of licorice on Richie's tongue. His mind is blissfully blank but for the chorus of *I want* that echoes as his hands grasp at Richie's waist through his t-shirt.

When they finally come up for air, for the first time in his life, Eddie doesn't mind that he can't catch his breath. He looks down at his knees, back up at Richie, and realizes—he hasn't said a word.

Terrified, exhilarated, Eddie attempts to break the silence himself, tripping over his own tongue. "So...you..." Richie nods, eyes wider than usual behind his glasses. He finally manages to speak, though he's remarkably less eloquent than usual. "That was..." *Exactly what I've wanted for longer than I can remember*, he can't seem to bring himself to say, though he thinks Eddie knows. He hopes Eddie knows.

"We should do that again," he settles upon instead, feeling a grin steal across his face as Eddie nods, perhaps a bit too enthusiastically. "Now?" Richie asks, but it's hardly a question; "Now," Eddie agrees, cheeks pink, heart racing, hand on Richie's jaw as he tilts his face up to meet him halfway.

(By the time they part ways, neither of them has the faintest recollection of what, exactly, Richie had even been talking about.)

The last time they kiss, they're eighteen years old and Eddie is leaving Derry—leaving what's left of the Losers, leaving Richie—and there's a tightness in his chest the inhaler won't, can't help.

They're moving to New York City, Eddie and his mother—*this will be good for us*, Sonia insists, but all Eddie can think of is disease, the potential for infection in the big city, and wonders if she'll ever set foot outside the apartment. Part of him is ready to start over in a place where It has never haunted his dreams, but a larger part of him knows, somehow, that leaving Derry will change everything. Will change him and Richie, no matter how desperately they insist otherwise. Eddie hears it in the back of his mind, a voice telling him to *say goodbye, because this is the last time*, and he feels helpless,

hopeless as he sinks his hands into Richie's curls and kisses him until neither of them can breathe.

When they break apart, minutes, hours later, Richie looks like he understands, like he feels it too. "I'll miss you," Eddie says, uncharacteristically low-key, painfully honest. Richie's smile in return is slow, sad, so unlike him that Eddie has to bite his lip, choke back the anxiety that threatens to suffocate him. "We'll see each other soon," Richie says, not believing it himself; Eddie buries his face in Richie's neck and tries to think *maybe*, tries not to think anything at all.

Except that the last time— well, isn't the last time, after all.

The final page of a chapter, perhaps, memories of Derry slipping away until all that's left is an emptiness neither of them can explain, can fill— but it's not an ending. Not even close.

The next time they kiss, they're forty years old and all Eddie can think is *oh*, is *right*, *that's how that's supposed to feel*.

For the past twenty-odd years, Eddie Kaspbrak has felt off-kilter. He's learned to function, to practically thrive in that state; he would swear he's more at home when something feels *wrong*, when he's not waiting for the other shoe to drop. He's never quite been able to silence the voice in his head that sounds suspiciously like his mother, insisting upon hygiene, upon playing it safe, and though nothing he does ever feels like *enough*, it's enough to get by, to get him through the day.

(There's another voice that lingers in the back of his mind more often than he'd care to admit: one he doesn't consciously recognize or remember, an inhuman rasp that sets his teeth on edge, prickles at the hair on the back of his neck. *Eddie...what are you looking for?*)

Then he finds himself back in Derry, the past rushing back in fits and starts, and pieces he hadn't even known were missing begin to fall

into place.

The group has branched off (in pairs, at Bill's insistence— Bill and Mike, Ben and Bev), leaving Richie and Eddie alone in Eddie's hotel room, and Eddie would trade everything he left behind for Richie to keep looking at him like he is right now. This time it's Richie who kisses Eddie, stepping up to him at the foot of the bed as he takes his face in his hands, surprisingly tentative. *Is this alright?* he seems to ask without asking; *more than*, Eddie thinks in response as he deepens the kiss, letting Richie pull him down onto the bed, into his lap, knees on either side of his hips.

"Still so small, Eds," Richie teases fondly between kisses, cracking a grin that brings back a whole new flood of memories that have nothing to do with that damn clown; "Not where it counts," Eddie sasses right back, feeling like a teenager again, like they're making up for lost time as he bites Richie's lower lip, swallows his laughter.

He hears that voice once more, but it's changed: this time, it sounds just like Richie. *Eddie, what are you looking for?*

He finally thinks he knows the answer.

The last time they kiss— and it is the last, no going back again, no second third fourth chances— Eddie is still, Richie's lips trembling as they touch his cheek. He's blinded by tears, by rage, haunted by the thought of leaving him here in the dark, by the words Eddie never got to say.

(He knows. Of course he knows. He's known since they were sixteen years old, ungainly limbs tangled together on the couch in Richie's basement, Eddie's voice quiet but steady. Known since long before that, known even when the name *Eddie Kaspbrak* meant nothing to him, but he hates— hates that *It* robbed him of his last breath, that he can still feel the phantom brush of Eddie's fingers against his cheek.)

Richie says it now, lips to Eddie's ear like he can hear him. Eddie's not meant to stay here, he knows, but he wasn't meant to die either—

he looks up at Ben and Bev, helpless, seeking something he doesn't know how to name. Ben nods as tears run silently down Beverly's face; she clings to him as Richie touches Eddie's cheek, lingering only a moment before he pulls away, forcing himself to his feet. He doesn't look back down, doesn't dare as he kicks the door shut, screaming his agony. ("Why'd you do that?" Beverly asks, and he tells her he doesn't know, but he knows exactly.)

They make their way out of the tunnels, out of Derry once more, and though the memories begin to fade too quickly the emptiness never does— an acute, incessant pain that occasionally leaves Richie gasping for air, grasping for something (someone, perhaps) that's just out of reach.

When Richie dreams, he dreams of dark, dripping tunnels, of a guilt he can't shake, until the nightmare fades and he's left with— warmth. Lush trees, the sparkling water of the Quarry, ice cream dripping over his fingers and a boy— a boy whose name he doesn't know, but whose dark, gleaming eyes see straight through him, whose lips curve into an affectionate smile around the word *loser* before he dashes away, turning back to gesture impatiently, to call over his shoulder: *You know I...*

He never quite finishes speaking, but Richie follows every time.